Australian Bureau of Statistics

6239.0 - Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Aug 2004 to Jun 2005

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Child care, lack of training and disability are common barriers to working

Child care, lack of training and disability were among the most common barriers preventing people from working or working extra hours, according to new analysis released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The ABS estimated 6.3 million people had the potential, but not necessarily the desire, to fully participate in the workforce. These were people who were either unemployed, working less than 16 hours a week or who were not in the labour force. The survey found almost three-quarters (72% or 4.5 million people) of these people did not want to work or did not want to work additional hours.

People who want (more) work

However, 28% (1.8 million people) did want to work or work extra hours but faced a range of barriers to achieving this. Of these people:

- 35% (627,000 people) were seeking a job or extra working hours and could start work within four weeks. The most common difficulty these people had in finding work was that they 'lacked the necessary training, qualifications and experience' (17% said this was their main difficulty). These were mostly people who did not have university, TAFE or other non-school qualifications.
- 19% (348,500 people) would have preferred to work or work more hours, but were not available to start within four weeks. The main barrier for men in this group was 'long-term sickness or disability', while the most common barrier for women was 'child care, pregnancy or home duties'.
- 45% (813,700 people) did want to work or work additional hours but weren't seeking anything due to other commitments, mainly 'child care, pregnancy or home duties' (22%) or 'study commitments' (13%).

People who don't want (more) work

Out of the 4.5 million people who did not want to work or work extra hours:

- 86% (3.9 million people) were not part of the labour force. Three common reasons these people gave for not wanting a job were permanent retirement (32% of people said that this was one of the reasons they didn't want work), 'no need/retired for now' (30%) and 'long-term sickness or disability' (22%).
- 14% (630,100 people) were working few (less than 16) hours. Many of these people said that they did not want to work any extra hours because of 'child care, pregnancy or home duties' (48% of women said this was one reason they had for working few hours), or study commitments (40% of men gave this as a response).

Further details can be found in **Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, August 2004 to June 2005** (cat. no. 6239.0), available free of charge.

Media note: This survey focused on people 18 years and older who were either not employed or who worked under 16 hours a week, between August 2004 and June 2005.

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